DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 077 328 HE 004 046

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TITLE	Racial Attitudes of White University Students and Their Parents.
INSTITUTION	Maryland Univ., College Park. Cultural Study Center.
REPORT NO	RR-2-73
PUB DATE	73
NOTE	12p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	College Students; *Higher Education; *Parent Attitudes; *Race Relations; *Racial Attitudes; Racial Characteristics; Research Projects; *Student Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS	Situational Attitude Scale; *University of Maryland

ABSTRACT

The racial attitudes of a group of white entering university freshmen were compared to those of their parents. The Situational Attitude Scale (SAS) developed to measure the attitudes of whites toward blacks, was administered to 229 incoming white freshmen at the University of Maryland and 78 of their parents during a summer orientation session. Questionnaires were completed anonymously and subjects were not aware that different forms of the SAS were used. Both forms were identical except that the word "black" was inserted into each situation in form B. Results indicated that white parents and students generally tend to have negative and generally similar attitudes toward blacks. The apparent exceptions of being positive was toward a black magazine salesman or a black policeman. Students, on a number of instances, were more positive to situations regardless of the race of the person in the situation. A 13 item bibliography and appendix of instructions and situations from the SAS are included. (MJM)

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CULTURAL STUDY CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND

1973

RACIAL ATTITUDES OF WHITE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS

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HE004046

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SUMMARY

Many programs aimed at changing racial attitudes have been unsuccessful because program planners have not done a good job of assessing exactly what the racial attitudes of participants were. The purpose of this study was to compare and contrast the racial attitudes of a group of white entering freshmen to those of their parents. This information will be used to develop race relations training approaches for parent and student orientation programs and human relations programs and courses on campus.

The Situational Attitude Scale (SAS) was administered to 229 incoming white freshmen at College Park and 78 of their parents during a summer orientation session. Data were analyzed by analysis of variance and results indicated that both parents and students had generally negative attitudes toward blacks, particularly to blacks moving next door or becoming engaged to their friends. However, both students and parents actually preferred a black magazine salesman and black policeman to people in those same situations whose race was not identified. A quote from a hypothetical typical subject in the study best illustrates the general results, "It is OK for blacks to sell me magazines or be policemen but they had better not move next door or get engaged to any of my friends!" Parents, however, were more negative than students to blacks as neighbors or to a black youngster stealing.

Results are discussed in terms of implications for planning race relations training programs for students and parents.

In recent years faculty, students and student personnel workers at many colleges and universities have attempted to come to grips with the race related problems on their campuses. Much of this work has been a great deal less successful than hoped. For instance, despite apparently active recruiting programs relatively few blacks are entering large universities (4% in 1971, 5% in 1972) and the overall percentage of blacks in all colleges and universities is going down (Sedlacek, Brooks and Mindus, 1973; Sedlacek, Lewis and Brooks, 1973). Many programs aimed at changing racial attitudes, particularly of white students, have been attempted but relatively few have been evaluated. The writers feel that many programs do not work because no formal attempt is made to determine the initial attitudes of the students. Working with students in the context of their general and specific racial attitudes would seem to be important. Additional important components of racial attitudes of students are the racial attitudes of their parents. Much evidence exists indicating that parents are the primary source of many racial attitudes expressed by their children (e.g., Allport, 1958; Clark, 1963). Additionally, Campbell (1971) found that older whites tended to have more negative attitudes toward blacks than did younger whites.

The purpose of the current study was to compare and contrast the racial attitudes of a group of white entering university freshmen to those of their parents. This information will be used to develop race relations training approaches for parent and student orientation programs, and for human relations programs and courses on campus.

Method

The Situational Attitude Scale (SAS) was developed to measure the attitudes of whites toward blacks (Sedlacek and Brooks 1970, 1972). A racial context discouraging psychological withdrawal from the measure was established by using

10 personal and social situations relevant to a racial response (see Appendix). Subjects responded to 10 bipolar semantic differential scales for each situation (Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum, 1957); a total of 100 items. Two forms of the SAS (A and B) were used, both identical except that the word "black" was inserted into each situation in form B (see Appendix). The positive pole for each item was varied randomly from right to left to avoid response set.

The SAS was administered to 229 incoming white freshmen at the University of Maryland and 78 of their parents during a summer orientation session. Questionnaires were completed anonymously and subjects were not aware that different forms existed.

Results were analyzed by 2X2 analyses of variance for each item (N=100) and for each situation (N=10), where two levels of form (A and B) and two levels of group (parents and students) were the main effects. Since students and parents were randomly assigned to either form, any significant form differences were attributable to the insertion of the word "black" in form B.

Results

Fifty-nine of the 100 items showed significant differences on form, 38 items were significant on group, and 10 items were significant on the interaction of form and group. Sakoda, Cohen and Beall (1954) indicated that about 9 tests would be significant at the .05 level due to chance, indicating that large form and group differences exist but the interaction could be explained by chance.[1]

Six situations were significantly different on form, five were significant on group and the interaction was significant for two situations (Table 1). The results indicated that all subjects tended to feel negatively toward blacks in situations I (new family next door), V (friend becomes engaged), VIII (younger

[1] Only situation data are reported in a table. Item data available

steals) and IX (campus demonstration). More specifically, using the bipolar items from the SAS, all subjects tended to feel: bad, unsafe, angry, not sympathetic, sad and undesirable toward a black family moving next door; aggressive, sad, intolerable, insulted, angered, hopeless, unexcited, wrong and disgusting toward a friend becoming engaged to a black; sad, disinterested, indifference and expected toward a black youngster stealing; and bad, indifferent, suspicious, unsafe and disturbed toward a black student demonstration.

However, all subjects tended to feel more positively toward blacks in situations III (man selling magazines) and VI (stopped by policeman) than where race was not mentioned (Form A). Subjects felt relaxed, receptive, excited, glad, pleased, indifferent, tolerable and friend toward a black magazine salesman; and they felt calm, trusting, safe, friendly, tolerant, pleasant, cooperative, "acceptive," and superior toward a black policeman.

The differences by group (disregarding race) indicate that parents tended to be more negative toward rape (situation II), a magazine salesman (situation III), being stopped by a policeman (situation VI) and standing on a bus (situation X), while students tended to be more negative about a youngster stealing (situation VIII).

The interaction indicated that parents felt even more negative than students to blacks as neighbors (situation I) or to a black youngster stealing (situation VIII).

Discussion

The most general conclusion from the study is that white parents and students tend to have negative and generally similar attitudes toward blacks. The apparent exceptions of being positive toward a black magazine salesman or

black policeman need further elaboration. Sedlacek and Brooks (1970) interpreted this as in essence a negative attitude. They indicated that situations involving more social distance in contact with blacks are reacted to more positively by whites. Additionally, both these situations involve service roles and whites viewing blacks as appropriately filling service roles is a well documented stereotype (Rose, 1968). This interpretation is supported by the fact that situations I (new family next door) and V (friend becomes engaged) showed the greatest mean differences between Forms A and B and both of these situations involve relatively close personal contact. Additionally, it has been shown that among white students there is strong reinforcement for being tolerant toward blacks (Sedlacek and Brooks, 1971), so the results could be interpreted as an overreaction or relief to see blacks in a situation that could be tolerated by most whites. The reaction of a hypothetical, typical subject might best summarize the general results of the study: "It's OK for blacks to sell me magazines or be policemen but they had better not move next door or get engaged to any of my friends!"

But additionally there were a number of differences in the attitudes of students and their parents. Generally, students were more positive to many of the situations regardless of the race of the person in the situation. Parents being more shocked by rape, and negative toward magazine salesmen, policemen and standing on a bus is interesting but perhaps expected.

Situation VIII (youngster steals) provides a rather complex relationship between student and parent racial attitudes. While students generally felt more negative toward the situation regardless of the race of the person in it, parents felt *relatively* more negative to a black youngster stealing than where race is not mentioned. This perhaps reflects a greater stereotype among parents (e.g., What could you expect of a black youngster?) than students, and might show an

age difference. Generally situation VIII has not generated a strong racial response from students in past studies (Sedlacek and Brooks, 1972).

Parents felt more negative toward black neighbors than did students. This is an important difference which should be covered in any race relations program. Relatively close permanent contact among racial and ethnic groups appears to be a prerequisite to developing positive relationships. For instance, in a campus setting Brooks, Sedlacek and Mindus (1973) concluded that the relatively transitory contacts among different racial and ethnic groups which typical campus life allows (e.g., classrooms, student union, athletic events) do not provide much hope for reduced racial tension. They indicate that interracial roommates appear to be the best long term hope for a positive racial climate on campus, which might carry into later life. However, while regular and sustained interracial contact is a prerequisite to improved racial tensions, it is not a guarantee. As Amir (1969) notes, unless there is an atmosphere of equality in the contact and perceived mutual benefit, contact may maintain or increase negative feelings. Too often the black student is viewed as a teaching aid to combat white racism. By providing and working hard for a positive interracial climate through orientation programs, human relations programs, counseling, student activities, and residence hall room assignments and programs, student personnel workers could make a difference. In the parent orientation program at Maryland, some concerns were expressed by white parents about having black roommates for their sons and daughters, which is even closer contact than a "neighbor." These results indicate this may be a primary area of disagreement between parents and students and a key topic to cover in separate or combined sessions with them.

It is the hope of the writers that this study will encourage those interested in eliminating racism, and that they will note the results and perhaps conduct their own studies on the needs of the recipients of race relations training. Without an index of where a group is "coming from," it is unlikely that sensible or effective programs can be generated.

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TABLE 1

Means and Standard Deviations of SAS Situation Scores[a] for Parents and Students

SITUATION[b]	FORM A-PARENTS MEAN	FORM A-PARENTS S.D.	FORM A-STUDENTS MEAN	FORM A-STUDENTS S.D.	FORM B-PARENTS MEAN	FORM B-PARENTS S.D.	FORM B-STUDENTS MEAN	FORM B-STUDENTS S.D.
I. New Family Next Door (F,FG)	2.98	0.51	2.76	0.52	2.59	0.65	2.64	0.75
II. Man Raped Woman (G)	1.09	0.39	1.48	0.47	0.98	0.37	1.38	0.50
III. Man Selling Magazines (F,G)	1.71	0.58	1.81	0.55	1.98	0.57	2.14	0.63
IV. Corner of Loitering Men	1.88	0.32	1.89	0.39	1.87	0.31	1.89	0.30
V. Friend Becomes Engaged (F)	3.14	0.63	3.09	0.54	2.47	0.79	2.58	0.82
VI. Stopped by Policeman (F,G)	1.84	0.57	2.16	0.67	2.50	0.56	2.76	0.62
VII. Person Joins Social Group	2.84	0.60	2.76	0.63	2.98	0.63	2.79	0.72
VIII. Youngster Steals (F,G,FG)	2.58	0.46	1.90	0.57	2.30	0.44	1.86	0.50
IX. Campus Demonstration (F)	1.93	0.56	1.99	0.76	1.73	0.62	1.86	0.69
X. Only Person Standing (G)	2.10	0.67	2.33	0.75	2.12	0.67	2.26	0.70

[a] 4=positive attitude; 0=negative attitude.

[b] Situation described in Appendix. Letters in parentheses indicate analysis of variance terms significant beyond .05 (F=form [A or B], G=group [parent or student], FG is the interaction).

APPENDIX

Instructions and Situations from the Situational Attitude Scale*

INSTRUCTIONS

This questionnaire measures how people think and feel about a number of social and personal incidents and situations. It is not a test so there are no right or wrong answers. The questionnaire is anonymous so please DO NOT SIGN YOUR NAME.

Each item or situation is followed by 10 descriptive word scales. Your task is to select, for each descriptive scale, the rating which best describes YOUR feelings toward the item.

Sample item: Going out on a date

happy ' A ' B ' C ' D ' E ' sad

You would indicate the direction and extent of your feelings (e.g., you might select B) by indicating your choice (B) on your response sheet by blackening in the appropriate space for that word scale. DO NOT MARK ON THE BOOKLET. PLEASE RESPOND TO ALL WORD SCALES.

Sometimes you may feel as though you had the same item before on the questionnaire. This will not be the case, so DO NOT LOOK BACK AND FORTH through the items. Do not try to remember how you checked similar items earlier in the questionnaire. MAKE EACH ITEM A SEPARATE AND INDEPENDENT JUDGMENT. Respond as honestly as possible without puzzling over individual items. Respond with your first impressions whenever possible.

SITUATIONS

	FORM A	FORM B
I.	A new family moves in next door to you.	A new black family moves in next door to you.
II.	You read in the paper that a man has raped a woman.	You read in the paper that a black man has raped a white woman.
III.	It is evening and a man appears at your door saying he is selling magazines.	It is evening and a black man appears at your door saying he is selling magazines.
IV.	You are walking down the street alone and must pass a corner where a group of five young men are loitering.	You are walking down the street alone and must pass a corner where a group of five your black men are loitering.
V.	Your best friend has just become engaged.	Your best friend has just become engaged to a black person.
VI.	You are stopped for speeding by a policeman.	You are stopped for speeding by a black policeman.
VII.	A new person joins your social group.	A new black person joins your social group.
VIII.	You see a youngster steal something in a dimestore.	You see a black youngster steal something in a dimestore.
IX.	Some students on campus stage a demonstration.	Some black students on campus stage a demonstration.
X.	You get on a bus and you are the only person who has to stand.	You get on a bus that has all black people aboard and you are the only person who has to stand.

*The Situational Attitude Scale is copyrighted and available from Natresources, Inc., 520 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60611.